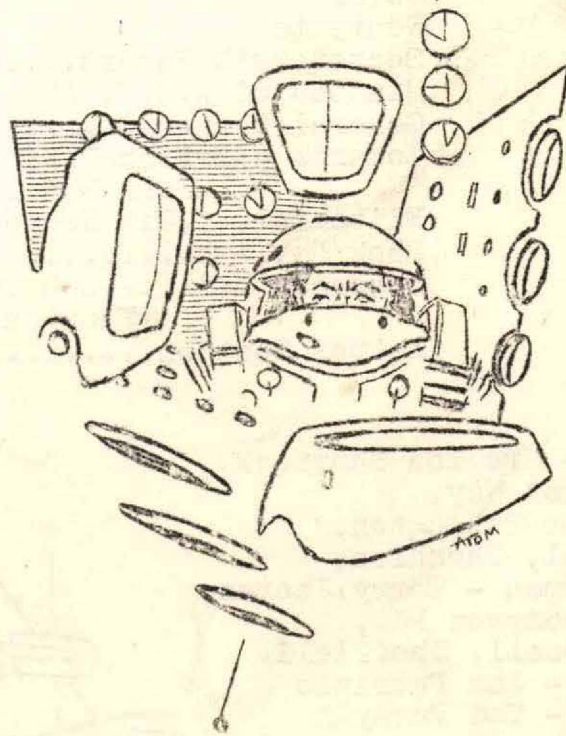


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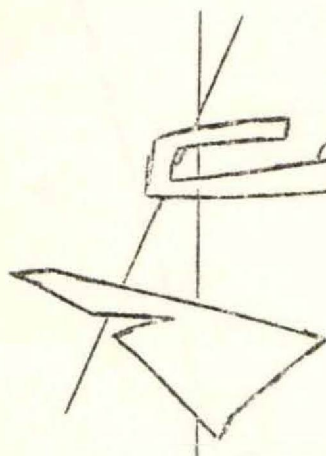
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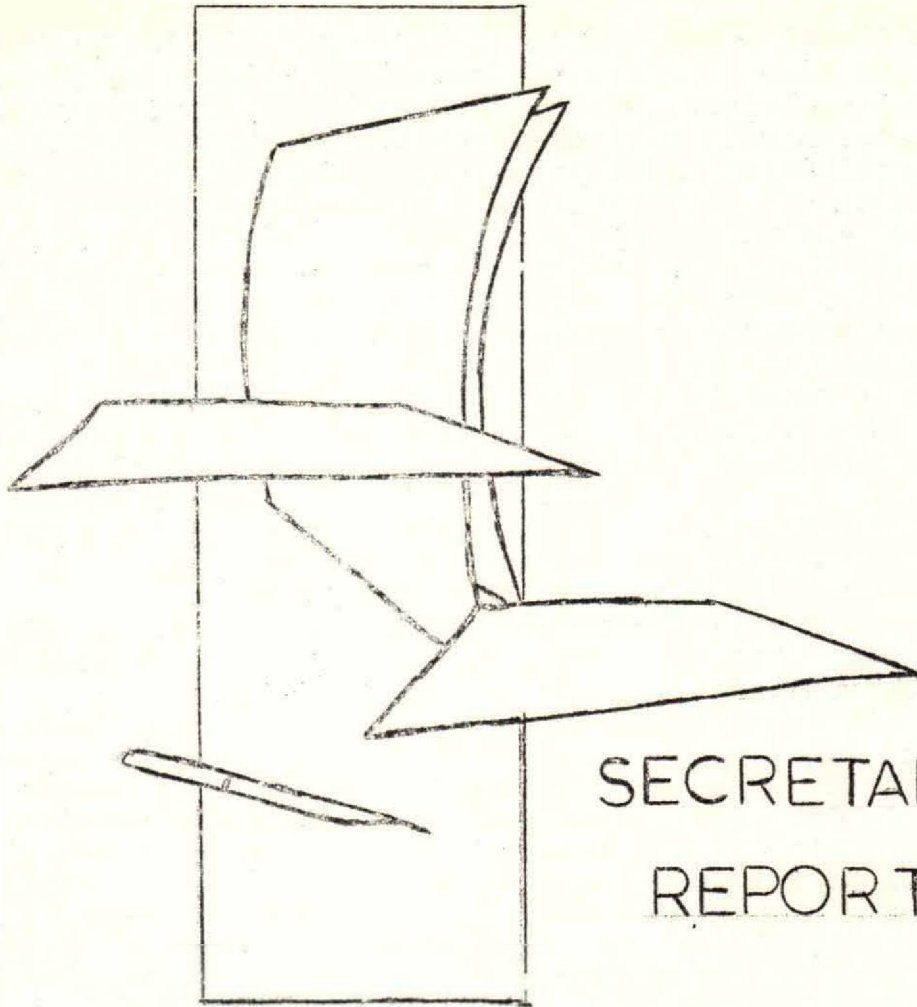
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SECRETARY'S REPORT

JOE PATRIZIO.

This being my very first communication with the BSFA membership, in an official capacity, I am finding it very difficult to decide just what to say to you all. I know that it says at the top of the page, that this is a 'Report', but since taking office last Easter, I have been so busy finding out just what that previous Committee did, and what there is still to do, that there has been very little time to start anything original moving, although there have been one or two good ideas bandied about at the Friday night meetings, that are held at Ella's. The 'Report' part can therefore be covered by the succinct expression "Everything under control"...for the time being at any rate.

While on the subject of taking over the secretaryship from Ella Parker, I would like to take the opportunity to thank her for the extremely orderly manner in which she kept all official correspondence and documents; thus making it very easy for me to get into the swing of things, I only hope I can do as well for the next secretary. Thanks Ella.

Coming to you along with this issue of VECTOR is a draft of the new Constitution. It seems that up to now there has been no official Constitution at all, previous committees have been working

to a set of unofficial rules. This is all very well if the BSFA could guarantee to elect themselves Committees as good as those which we have had up to now, but unfortunately we cannot guarantee this. It was with this in mind that the last Committee decided to bring the Constitution up to date, and present it to the membership for their approval. Unfortunately there was so much to be cleared up in the old unofficial Constitution that by the time it was in a fit state to be put before you there was not enough time to do so, before the Committee retired. This we are doing now, and we would like any comments you have to reach us as soon as possible.

I would now like to say some words on a subject that was quite adequately covered in the last VECTOR, or so some of you might think, but one which has caused me a lot of heart palpitations, and some increase in blood pressure. The subject is fandom and the BSFA, and this time John Phillifent is the cause of my discomfort. I'm afraid that I might dwell on some of the points commented on by our editor and previous secretary, but for the sake of completeness I feel that this is justified.

Also I think I should state that the opinions I am stating are my own, and although they may very well be shared by the rest of the committee (or not), they are in no way official.

Time and again John Phillifent has said that fandom holds no interest for him; fair enough, I would be the last one to force anyone to indulge in something with which they would be bored. But time and again John Phillifent has given forth his opinions of fandom, a subject which he has admitted he knows nothing about. I find it difficult to understand how someone can be so violently against something of which they are almost completely ignorant, but at the present that is of no consequence, the point at issue is that I disagree with Mr. Phillifent, and think that much of the argument he presented in the last VECTOR was founded on false premises.

I will go through his letter taking each point as I come to it and give my views.

To state, as Mr. Phillifent did, that fandom makes one almost immune to common sense, is just slightly ridiculous. To be sure, I know of about three people who have gone to this extreme in fandom, but to state this as a general rule is laughable. The same happens in all facets of life, and I know, or know of, people acting in the same way about Science, Painting, Golf and even SF.

Let us now take a look at Mr. Phillifent's mathematics. I am quite prepared to accept the figure of 200,000 as the SF reading population, and will even accept the figure he gives for the size of fandom, what I most definitely will not accept are the conclusions which are drawn from these figures. When Mr. Phillifent states that out of every hundred persons who read SF, only one is 'fan' inclined, he makes one big, wrong, assumption. He assumes that all those reading SF know of the existence of fandom. Now just stand back and look at that assumption and you will see that to found any argument on it is really asking for trouble. Does Mr. Phillifent really think that fandom is keeping 200,000 people out of the BSFA? Does he really think that all these people are waiting with bated breath for 'fans' to stop having anything to do with the BSFA, so that they can leap in and obtain membership?

Does Mr. Phillifent really think that the whole SF reading population knows about fandom, or even the BSFA come to that? If he does, I will admit to being somewhat surprised, if he doesn't then why imply that he does.

And now to the old argument that the BSFA is too fannishly inclined. This argument is probably based on the fact that the committee has always been composed mainly, if not entirely, of fans. I feel slightly frustrated at having to say again that there is nobody else to do the job. Of course past committees have used the 'fannish' approach, and technique, because that is the one they are most familiar with, and just being amateurs, and not professionals, they could not devote all their time to creating new techniques. If there was something inherently wrong with their methods, why didn't somebody say something? They were asked often enough.

I find Mr. Phillifent's criticisms of the BSFA unacceptable insofar as they were entirely destructive criticisms and there was not one word to tell us what he thought was the right way to try to influence, persuade, or browbeat people into joining the BSFA. Anybody can criticise destructively, it takes no great intelligence to do that. I personally would have expected better from John Phillifent, and I still hope that I will hear something constructive from him.

While on the subject I would like to say that although I have taken a view opposed to Mr. Phillifent, I by no means believe that the BSFA is the epitome of perfection, and any ideas you may have on how to improve any part or function of the Association will be very welcome. When we hear nothing from the members we naturally assume that they are quite happy with the way things are being run, if however you are not, then for goodness sake let us know, and we will try to do something about it.

Well, that just about winds things up for this issue. In future reports I hope that there will be news about what the BSFA is up to, and if you co-operate, I will include suggestions that have been sent in to improve the Association.

FREE ADVERT.

John R. Campbell, 40 Nook Rise, Liverpool 15.
wants the following:-

Saturday Evening Post 19th March 1960

(article on William Coule must be intact)

Bloch Opener of the Way (Arkham House)

H.P. Lovecraft Marginalia, Supernatural Horror in
Literature.

H.P.L. and Derleth Lurker at the Threshold.

Any issues of Arkham Sampler

H.P.L.'s Shadow over Innsmouth, Shadow out of Time,
At the Mountains of Madness, Dreams in the Witch-house,
in ANY readable edition.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE
FICTION ASSOCIATION HELD AT THE NEW COUNTY HOTEL, GLOUCESTER, ON
2ND APRIL 1961.

Committee Members present: President - Brian Aldiss
Chairman - Mrs. Ina Shorrocks
Secretary - Miss Ella Parker
Treasurer - A.H. Mercer.
Editor - James Groves

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 11.10 am and announced that the following nominees for the 1961-62 BSFA Committee had been accepted:

Chairman : Mrs. Ina Shorrocks
Secretary: J. Patrizio
Treasurer: E. Forsyth
Editor : James Groves

The office of Vice Chairman was contested by Mrs. G. Adams and B.T. Jeeves. All postal votes were counted by Mrs. Roberta Gray, and B.T. Jeeves, having received two thirds of the votes cast, was elected Vice Chairman for 1961-62. Holders of this Office will automatically become Chairman in the following year.

Secretary's Report.

The Secretary announced that this was in VECTOR, which was distributed at the Convention.

Treasurer's Report.

A.H. Mercer, retiring Treasurer, announced that his report was also in VECTOR, the official organ of the BSFA. He reported that the Association was solvent and that among its assets was the BSFA library.

Editor's Report.

James Groves, who is staying in office for a further term, also stated that his report was in VECTOR.

The following is a report of the proposals and suggestions discussed at the Annual General Meeting.

Vote of Thanks.

It was proposed by Roberta Gray and seconded by Brian Jordan that A.H. Mercer, who has been Treasurer of the BSFA since its inception, should be accorded a vote of thanks for the groundwork and help he has freely given in helping to make the BSFA a success. Passed unanimously.

The Secretary said at this point that there were two groups in the BSFA, i.e. the "fans" or active group, who were the people who had originally started the BSFA, and a passive group. Of necessity it was the former group who had the most to do with the running of the BSFA and these activities had to be done in their spare time. The Secretary pointed out, however, that the BSFA was for all members, and members who fell into the second (passive)

category were invited to put forward their opinions and ideas.

K.F. Slater suggested that what sf readers do want is a cross-checklist of specific British and American magazines. B.T. Jeeves and C. Miller offered to help with a checklist.

S.F. Book Club. The Secretary mentioned the SFBC and a criticism of same which appeared in a letter in VECTOR. She pointed out that the criticism was in no way derogatory to the SFBC, but the letter writer (Ethel Lindsay) had remarked on the number of books which members had already read as serials in the magazines of the genre, which meant that the SFBC members quite often bought stories they already had in serial form. She suggested that the SFBC should consult the BSFA, which was representative of a good cross section of SF readers. K.F. Slater, from the booksellers point of view, said that the average public read magazines, and when buying books wanted something different. The Secretary went on to suggest that it would probably help the SFBC if the BSFA could make an impression on them, and they took notice of what the Association had to say.

E.J. Carnell, editor of Britain's three science fiction magazines, announced that he was willing to help with suggestions to non-professionals and that the BSFA had made itself felt, that it has made a very good start and done very well indeed. It was his opinion that the Association was on the right track. He also said that most of the publishers are very interested in knowing what people want to read in SF.

Ron Bennett said that the Association should be concerned over the publication of sf and the main thing was to keep a balance in the OO for the passive and active members i.e. the OO should be neither too personal nor too impersonal. Brian Aldiss said that the Association did try to keep a balance which should satisfy everybody.

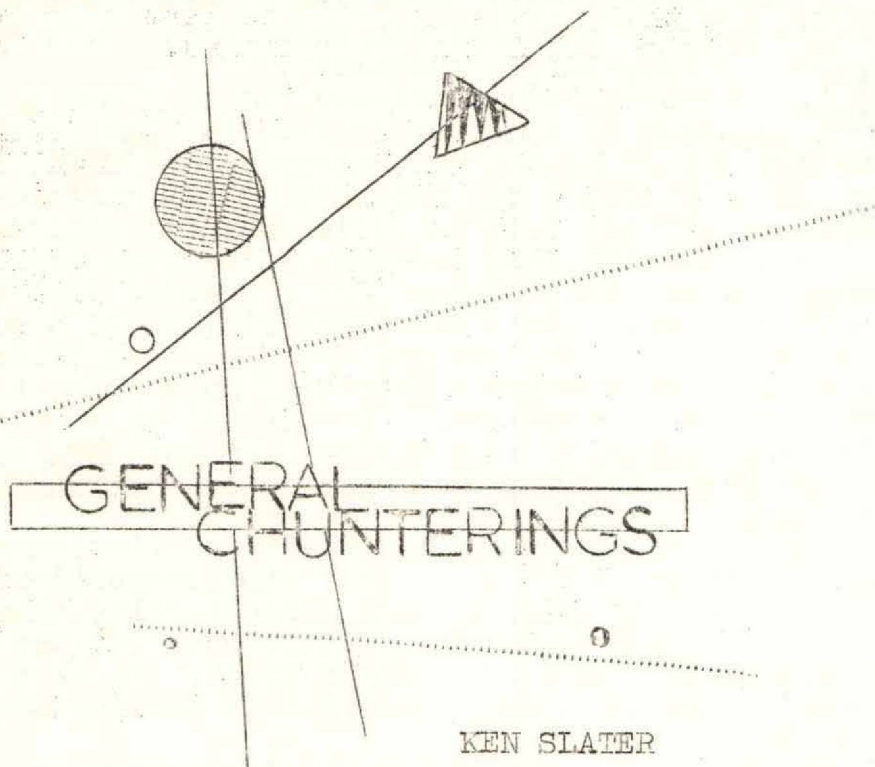
Criticisms of books and magazines in the OO were discussed and K.F. Slater asked if it were essential that the reviewer should be a member of the BSFA. It was agreed that this was not necessary as long as whoever did the reviewing knew what he was about, and at the request of the Committee K.F. Slater agreed to get in touch with an outside contributor.

E.J. Carnell suggested that the BSFA could run a competition, each member to choose ten stories they would like to see in an anthology.

R. Buckmaster put forward the suggestion that it would help if the BSFA could actually persuade a publisher to print a science fiction anthology chosen from stories suggested by members of the Association. The Committee agreed to look into this at the request of the members.

E. Bentcliffe suggested that some cards could be printed, stating that the BSFA exists, and sent to publishers every two months. K.F. Slater said that some publishers did not wish the titles they published to be known as sf, and the suggestion of cards was passed over to the Committee for discussion at their next meeting. Brian Aldiss said that it would help if VECTOR had more news in it and members were asked to forward any news they thought of interest to the editor.

continued on page 29




KEN SLATER

Recently I was shown a cutting from a paper complaining that booksellers don't know their trade these days....that there are few "good general booksellers" left...etc...etc...there may be some truth in this, but there is another side to the coin...as always...for one thing a "good bookseller" generally knows what he is going to sell...and if he stocks up on stuff that he isn't going to sell, well, he won't be even a "bad bookseller" for long. ...the profit element compared to the overheads is low....there are upwards of 20,000 books published in this country each year.. ..and a good proportion of them may remain in print for two or three (or even more) years....add to this the colossal amount of ephemeral publication which borders the book trade (the so-called "libraries", for example, of which there are upwards of 80 a month)and the varied importations of American material, books published in Germany but printed in English...and so on...and imagine the amount of shelving and the size of the building that you would require to stock even a fairly representative selection of this material....honestly it is hardly surprising that booksellers tend more and more to specialise...one of the biggest faults in bookselling today is the lack of a quick and economical method of dealing with what are termed "single copy" orders - I'll enlarge on that sometime...inside this ephemeral material one finds a lot of odd stuff of passing interest to the sf addict...MALE, '61 Nov, contains Al Silverman's "New Evidence That There's Life in Outer Space"...opening out with a "blue" joke and some pictures intended (?) for humour effect, the article gives some serious if rather

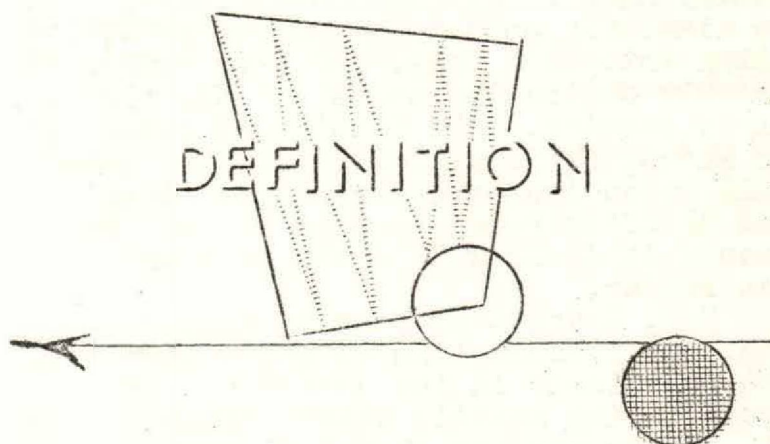
erratic reporting of possibilities, both from the serious side and the "cultist" type...SIR KNIGHT Vol.1, No.12 has an item "The Star Thieves" by Thomas R. Fuller which pulls a deliberate parallel with a mundane theme, very effectively...FLING Festival (No.4) gives with a salacious fantasy "When the Spirit Moves You" by Larrie Maddock and Corrie Howard...a young lady ghost in love with a not-yet-a-ghost young man...only about 5 pages long, so hardly worth a dollar for the mag, but if you find one lying around.... ADAM V.4, No.7, a Thorne Smith-ish fantasy of shop dummies coming to life, in "The Semi-Marvellous Power of Mr. Peal" by E. Jerome.. ..the trouble is that to find these odd grains of gold (or near - gold) one has to process a ton or two of ore-pulp/slick paper.... can be expensive.....John Carnell's editorial in New Worlds 107 throws some light on a situation which many SF readers have been finding confusing, and will (I hope) save me writing a few lettersthe picture won't get clearer for a while yet; I guess....I've only one note to add to Editor Carnell's comments, and that is he omitted to note that Muller (who he mentions as importing Gold Medal) have also been importing Crest titles, and the Signet and Mentor titles of the New American Library....the significance of that point will be apparent to all who have read the editorial.... but despite this many odd points crop up....I am authoritatively informed that Dell will not permit the importation of their "Year's Best" series (those edited by Judith Merril) for copyright reasonsat the same time no publisher over here seems to be the least interested in issuing British editions....Thorpe and Porter now importing Ballantine have so far brought in Lester del Rey's "Robots and Changelings", but have nothing else in view according to their representative on his last visit to me....which incidentally brings me back to my first point - T&P are doing all their own distribution and that makes it difficult to get Ballantine titles unless you are on their calling list....on Ballantine, by the by, I've written to enquire whether they'll extend the "SF Preview" sub-club to cover Britain, and I'll let you know in my next column what the reply is - several enthusiasts have written my alter-ego asking for subs, which he(I) find it impossible to arrange....but there is a blow ahead for subscribers and fandom at large...postal rates seem to be going up all over again this year; I've no news of the British increases rumoured, but from the USA I have at least a sample quote - from 1st July air mail goes from 15¢ up to 25¢ an ounce to Britain.....now I've just imported a few Galaxy Novels, and hope to import a few more....but currently the carriage charge on those is \$1.00 a dozen, which means about 9d per copy...I hate to think what the future holds...Mr. I.F. Clarke, of the Royal College of Science and Technology, Glasgow, has been working on a bibliography of "future" fiction which will be published shortly.. ..he admits to some difficulty with the flood of paperbacks which have appeared since 1950, but believes that the work will have a major value in the new ground it breaks between 1600 and 1945.... no full details are available yet, but if interested parties will drop me a line I'll advise them as soon as firm data on price etc., is available....I'll also include further mention in this column, naturally, but then the news may be a couple of months old... Doubleday SF Book Club selections for July and August will be

"Stranger in a Strange Lan-d" by Robert A. Heinlein and "Three Hearts and Three Lions" by Poul Anderson...publishers edition prices on these are \$4.50 and \$2.95 respectively...the former title will be \$1.69 in the Book Club....and just so you know, I'll assure you that I have it in writing from Doubleday that membership in their Book Clubs is not open to denizens of the British Isles....please don't write and ask me to arrange your membership....my alter-ego obtains copies when he can, and sells 'em...alternatively you can make some mutual agreement with an American friend to obtain them and remail them to you...I'm planning a new scheme for tracking down books that someone wants, by the by...and if you'd like a list of up to five titles inserted in the first issue for free, then send them in to me....cost of future insertions will depend on several factors, not the least of which will be whether the results are satisfactory....a Chariot Book titled MATING CENTER by Frank B. Long (50¢, 1961, 160pp)...has happened along....this one belongs with the other sexography stuff which constitutes a large part of our American pb importation these days...June 1961 AMAZING STORIES has an interesting article about Robert A. Heinlein by Sam Moskowitz...Sam Moskowitz seems to write about everyone...anyone care to write about Sam?...interesting oddment is MacKinlay Kantor's IF THE SOUTH HAD WON THE CIVIL WAR, from Bantam (A2241, 35¢, 112pp)...it traces the history of the nations of North America (Texas, the Confederate and the United States) up to the present time, in addition to the major part of the theme which centres on the Civil War and the events immediately following.... I think the most important contribution which this book makes to sf is that it demonstrates quite feasible major divergencies from recorded history without making any real divergence from the total-ity of the outcome of world history....in effect, at the close of the book we are all more or less just where we are now...a new Poul Anderson collection from Ballantine, STRANGERS FROM EARTH, (483K, 35¢, 144pp) has eight tales...frankly, only passable in my opinion...however, with the thinning of the magazine field it is obvious that some barrel-scraping must be done by anthologists and editors of collections...I am continually surprised to realise that Britain can support three original sf mags in addition to a not inconsiderable circulation for two reprints and four original imported US mags...but I wonder for how long?...the "general adventure" fiction mags "Argosy" and "Suspense" have combined, and I gather that at least in this area sales of the combination are down...there may be something in this theory that the day of the magazine is ended...recommended non-sf reading is de Camp's "The Bronze God of Rhodes"...not published over here, and still at \$4.50 in the States...but keep an eye out for a cheaper edition... Ballantine have paperbacked Kingsley Amis' "New Maps of Hell" at 35¢....James Orton (Peverill Books) is working on a complete biblio to the works of Algernon Blackwood, and if you have any data on scarce copies I'll be glad to pass it along....I seem to have mislaid my index to ASF BRE 1939 - 1945, and if I've loaned it to someone, I'd be glad to have it back....it is required down in London for work on an even bigger index...see you at Harrogate....might even take the waters with you....? K.F.S.

TOWARDS TOWARDS



A
BETTER



by
JOHN T. PHILLIFENT.

No-one has yet succeeded in defining SF satisfactorily. Indeed, there are those who say SF cannot be defined, and that we shouldn't try, because it isn't a special 'kind' of fiction at all. But we all know what we mean when we refer to SF, which suggests that there is a common factor, somewhere, and if we could find and isolate it, we would be nearer a parameter, at least. All the definitions I have met, so far, are concerned with the content, with what the story is about. This seems to defeat its own object, as most readers agree in saying that SF should not have limits imposed on it; should be free to deal with any and all subjects. But, in a sense, definitions are limits. If you cannot draw lines, then you cannot define. Which sounds like stalemate.

I think there is a way out of this. I think there is a common factor to all SF, and that it is one we 'sense' rather than recognise, because it has very little to do with what the story is about. Before getting on to that, however, there are a few points which need to be cleared away. First of all, let's be clear that in any discussion like this we are talking about 'ideal' or 'pure' SF. The 'good' stuff. Now, an ideal is, by definition, something to be aimed at, but impossible to achieve. Then, 'pure' science is far removed from the 'practical' applications thereof. So,

likewise, we must expect the ideal SF form to be adapted and modified when done in 'practical' reality. This should cause no surprise, as it applies to all fiction. In any story, there is some degree of contrivance, or artistic license, if only to differentiate it from factual reportage.

Secondly, for the purpose of my argument, I propose to lump under SF both science-fiction and science-fantasy. The real reason will become apparent later, and may go some way to solving the question of differentiating between the two, as that is almost as vexed a question as that of definition. For the moment, I would like to make this point, that all fiction, of any kind, is fantasy, is a work of imagination, is unreal. Science, however, is definable as 'knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths, systematically arranged, and showing the operation of natural laws'. It would seem, then, that 'science' and 'fiction' are diametric opposites. Quite a few learned gentlemen have fallen into this trap, and have expressed themselves rather forcibly on the 'nonsense' of SF. In fact, the contradiction is only a seeming. All fiction must deal with facts, and facts that are known, or intelligible to the reader. If it did not, it would be as incomprehensible as if written in a foreign language. That SF often reads in this way to the 'lay' reader is simply because it deals with facts that are not known, or explained, to that reader.

Now, I don't propose to supply a long list of definitions, here, but I would like to quote just one. It was evolved by the late Bob Olsen, in the course of a very interesting and well-worth-reading article which appeared in the BRE No. 1 of 'FUTURE SF'. Olsen was one of the old-timers in SF, had read SF for more than sixty years, had written many stories for the earliest SF mags, more than twenty-five years ago, had Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from Brown University, and had taught maths, physics and chemistry. We can assume, I think, that he knew what he meant by SF. His article tells of his vain search for a ready-made definition, and ends with this offering ..

'Science-fiction; a narrative about an imaginary invention or discovery, which is possible in accordance with authentic scientific knowledge, and relates happenings and adventures which might reasonably result from the use of the invention or discovery.'

That is a fine, bold attempt. It incorporates almost all the better bits of all the other definitions I've met, and it does serve to define, by description, just about every 'good' SF story I can recall, offhand. But, and this is the snag, it serves equally well to define, precisely, a whole sheaf of other stories which appear, regrettably, from time to time, in SF mags and elsewhere, and for which we have coined the expressive term 'crud'. It illustrates, perfectly, the danger in trying to define SF in terms of what it should be about. I suggest that this is all wrong. I know that that is a large statement. I hope to be able to justify it. Like this.

Let's take, for comparison, a western; a crime; a detective, and an SF story. One recognises a western, at once, by the setting. This is true, also, of the crime and detective story. The temptation is to go on and say the same about SF. But it isn't

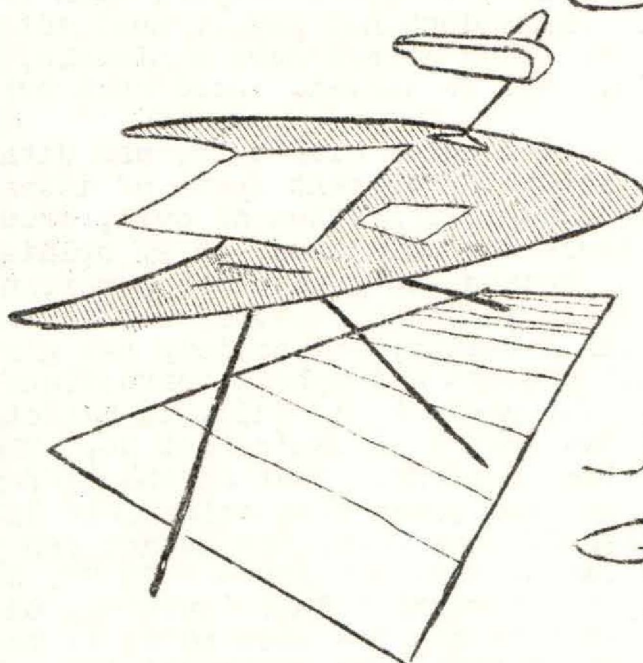
true. We have all seen and read too many stories with an authentic-seeming scientific background, which turned out to be 'crud', or 'pseudo-science-fiction'. This is what I meant when I said that the 'content' is not the way to define. The real key, I suggest, is the 'morality' of the tale. In a western, for instance, the hero always wins out, in the end, even though the villain may be stronger, tougher, have a bigger gang and be faster on the draw. Sherlock Holmes, likewise, always triumphs, even if he is matched against a genius. Crime does not pay .. must not be shown to pay. The catch-phrase is 'They always make a mistake, somewhere'. They must. Social morality must be served. Good must triumph over evil.

Let me say, at once, that I agree with this, and with those who complain, as they do, about the current spate of debased fiction in which there is near-glorification of evil, cruelty, crime and immorality. Authors who write thus, in my opinion, are being false to their cause, because they have the power, and the social responsibility to manipulate their plots so that they come out 'right'. This is social morality, and society has a right to demand that the writer will protect and uphold conventions. May I repeat .. the writer has the power to do this, in all other fiction. But not in SF. Not that he doesn't want to. That he cannot, if he is to write 'genuine' SF. That is the difference.

There is no playing fast and loose with scientific laws. It can't be done. In any other fiction form, the author can pull any trick he likes out of the bag to save the issue. In SF, once the basic postulates are made, the invention duly invented, the discovery made .. and any other ingredients you like added to taste .. the plot action must proceed according to 'natural' law. This, strictly; has nothing at all to do with the writer's likes and dislikes, but is inherent in the nature and development of the assumptions he has made for his story. He must say to himself .. 'Like it or not, given this and that .. things will inevitably work out thus'. This, strictly, is the one thing which sets SF apart from all other fiction, is why it has come up, again and again, with predictions which have come true, and is, in fact, why it cannot be defined in any other way.

I suggest, then; that it is science fiction when, no matter what the ingredients, the mainstream of the plot is worked out with full regard for scientific integrity. Then, if you like, it is science fantasy when the writer interferes, contrives and modifies principles to make the story come out to suit his wishes. Or the editor's. Or the reader's, of course. Anyone care to comment?

Editorial



James
Groves

You're all probably wondering why the editorial is here rather than at the beginning of VECTOR, so I'll explain. As editor I naturally see all of the material before anyone else, and could if I wished have a letter of comment on an issue in that issue. I haven't up to now because it would, in most cases, be rather pointless. Not so in this case. You've just read John Phillifent's article concerning the definition of sf. If not please do since I'll be referring to it. It started me thinking and has led to this editorial.

John has said that attempts to define sf by it's content are not very successful since they include a lot of 'crud' material. He then goes on to attempt to define it in terms of it's 'morality', it's 'scientific integrity' as he calls it. While this has some relevance I feel that it also includes material that is not sf as we recognise it. The tendency in all the attempts I have so far seen is to try to define sf in terms of one characteristic only. This is where I think that they go wrong, and I'd therefore like to proffer some thoughts of my own on the subject.

First let me state that I do not think that there is any clear-cut boundary between science fiction and fantasy and that, for my purposes, I will consider them together.

An sf or fantasy story must have the following characteristics:-

- 1) a) it must be set in a period ahead in time of when it was written,
or b) if set in a period the same as, or prior to, the period of writing it must contain devices, events or ideas that did not actually exist at that period in the reality known at the time of writing.
- 2) the influence of devices, or concepts, postulated or assumed during the course of the story must be developed logically.
- 3) the basic concepts of the story universe must be self consistent.
- 4) the setting of the story must be an integral part of the plot and not just a disposable backcloth.
- 5) concepts or devices must not be inserted towards the climax of the story merely to alter the ending to one arbitrarily considered more acceptable for publication.

Item 1 allows for outdated stories, parallel world lines and time travel.

Items 2 and 3 cover the question of 'scientific integrity'.

Item 4 eliminates "Romeo and Juliet with spaceships" and similar type plots.

Item 5 eliminates the crud where the hero, in an impossible situation, invents a super weapon at the 11th hour.

I feel that this series of requirements serves to define sf. Item 1 covers all sf, good, bad and indifferent; what the lay reader means when he says sf. Items 2 to 5 cover the factors distinguishing good sf (and fantasy) from bad.

THE H. G. WELLS SOCIETY.

I've received information just recently about the formation of a group composed of admirers of H.G. Wells and his work who are interested in promoting a wider interest in it. Their interests and activities will, to a certain extent, overlap with those of our Association so I'm passing on this information for any of the BSFA who may be interested. Membership will cost you £1 per year, 10/- if you are still receiving full-time education, or 25/- for a joint husband and wife subscription.

For this you get the quarterly journal, "The Wellsian" and other additional publications which may appear. A book supply service, new and second hand, is to be set up, and also a central lending library.

If you would like further details please contact - Mr. J.R. Hammond, 39 Rugby Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

Book

REVIEWS

E PLURIBUS UNICORN by Theodore Sturgeon. Panther Books 2/6d

This is a very interesting but uneven collection of stories, very few of which have very much to do with sf. There is plenty of horror and some humour of a rather revolting kind; but let us taste the wine before condemning the vintage!

Rather more than half the stories show a marked preoccupation with sex, unnatural, abnormal, or merely pathological. One of these, "The World Well Lost", is the only one in the book that I would class as true sf, in that a future sociology and technology are important factors in a story which is really about certain interesting manifestations of homosexuality. Halfway to sf are "It Wasn't Syzygy" and "The Sex Opposite". Both these are fantastic extensions of the astronomical concept into psychic and biological realms, and I suppose there is some attempt at a "scientific" explanation in the latter. At the other end of the scale, we have stories like "The Silken-Swift" which are not sf at all. This is, in fact; a straightforward exercise in witchcraft and the supernatural, highly erotic, and heavily larded with poetic writing of dubious value. I prefer less pretentious pornography.

There is evidence in these stories that Mr. Sturgeon has a nasty mind. A fascination with sexual aberration, as in "Bianca's Hands", or nightmare horrors, as in "The Professor's Teddy Bear", can be taken too far. Taken too far, indeed, it becomes ludicrous and parodies itself. This is not to say that some of the horrors are not pretty blood-curdling. "A Way of Thinking" comes off about as well as any story of this kind that I have read.

It would be unfair to finish without giving praise where it is well deserved. Sturgeon is a writer of great talent who can handle both the "poetic" and the "tough" style with equal ease. He can make words work for him more effectively than most sf writers and one is never vaguely embarrassed by an inability to make the most of a good idea - so often the failing with lesser men. In his poetic vein he is at his best in "A Saucer of Loneliness" (marginal sf), a moving and sometimes quite beautiful story; and in his vernacular style in "Scars" and "Die Maestro, Die!", which are not sf at all. This collection is well worth the halfcrown for the latter story alone - a first rate psychological thriller, where the nastiness and horror (all in the mind of the narrator) are never overdone and are all the more effective for that.

One last point - the cover design is one of those screaming nudes in the lascivious feelers of an obscene BEM (vegetable type): it has absolutely no connection with any event in the book, but for once it is a pretty accurate reflection of the ethos of some of the more unsavoury stories therein!

Geoffrey D. Doherty.

OSSIAN'S RIDE by Fred Hoyle. Four Square Books, 2/6d

ON THE BEACH and FURTHER OUTLOOK almost prejudiced me permanently against use of typical sf themes by straight novelists and eminent scientists respectively. I yawned through Shute's slackly-written, woodenly characterised and unconvincing effort to see what the fuss was about, and am still wondering; topicality was its sole virtue, and the message had been better handled by half the major sf writers. And I struggled through W. Grey Walter's abominably dull and pompous treatise (how, I can't imagine) purely because I'd paid for it.

So I began reading OSSIAN'S RIDE with mild apprehension, only to find the converse of FURTHER OUTLOOK - not a thick morass of speculation almost devoid of action or interest, but a romping trail of action largely devoid of solid content. Without being sarcastic, I think that condensation and a switch of emphasis from the rural rambles to the sf content might make OSSIAN'S RIDE into an effective long novelette.

The narrative gets into engaging stride with Thomas Sherwood being sent to spy on the Industrial Corporation of Eire (I.C.E.), whose growth and technological prowess is revolutionising Eire and worrying various governments. Early chapters have an attractive, pleasantly-handled spy thriller atmosphere in scenery that offers a refreshing change from England or America.

But Sherwood does not reach I.C.E., despite villainous interference, machinations, house-burning, murder, police-checks, document-stealing, bog-trotting, gate-vaulting; dodging by bus, bike and boat, cliff-climbing and peat-burning, until page 138 -

where he is mildly reproved for being a naughty spy and formally invited to join! This renders the previous hundred pages slightly pointless; in fact, even during the admittedly entertaining skull-duggery, little light is thrown on major problems, and there is frequently a pungent odour of red herring.

The final chapters, illustrating the control of I.C.E. over its employees, achieve some immediacy, though bigger aspects seem irritatingly skipped. And the denouement, in its context, is unexpected enough to be incongruous; suddenly I feel that a budding van Vogt has rounded off a yarn by a budding John Buchan. This might leave lay readers dissatisfied and little wiser, while sf fans might regard it as a morsel of meat in a big bowl of soup - thus I can't see either type of reader being very delighted.

The publisher classes it as a suspense novel, the label "sf" being prominently absent from blurb and cover, and generally it will appeal more to general readers. Strictly from an sf viewpoint, nothing drastically new is done; nor is anything old presented better than ever before. The book's best moments, to my mind, occur outside the sf content. Character-identification added to my pleasure, and throughout I was interested in Sherwood's plights, however irrelevant they appeared; I particularly liked the cliff-hanging incident. However while the assortment of characters and never quite essential action make OSSIAN'S RIDE into an enjoyable time-passer, I find it ultimately disappointing.

John Ashcroft

STRANGE RELATIONS by Philip Jose Farmer. Ballantine Books 2/6d

There are five stories in this pocket-book, all of which have seen previous magazine publication.

The cover, which is strikingly decorated in yellow and black, with coloured shapes making an archway for a running man, perhaps illustrating the last story, bears the statement that:

"Nothing in Man's history has prepared him for the weird life-forms of other planets - except Man himself."

The back-cover proclaims, with a flourish of trumpets, that:

"...he creates a mirror in which men, if they have the courage, can see themselves."

The weird life-form in "Mother", is an intelligent plant with a Mother complex, and one of the author's famous different reproductive systems. The story tells of the conflict between a Human Male, and this plant Female. The characterisation would seem to be weak, in that the Human adjusts too easily and quickly to the situation in which he finds himself, and the sf weak, as the communication problem, which is vital to the story, is solved much too easily. The physiology of the alien is handled well, and the idea originally handled, to make an entertaining story. It is, perhaps unfortunate that the first story in the book should be one in which the characterisation is not quite good enough for the reader to sink himself in the story; as a participant, so that the back-cover is wrong about it.

"Daughter" continues the story, from where it was left in "Mother". It is a monologue by one of the Daughter plants, of

whom it might be said that the Human is the father. In the peculiar psychology of the Plants, he is, if not in the Human sense. We read how he has taught the young plant to evolve, and the effects that this has on it. The plant seems to think too much like a human, to be quite believable. The story seems to be built round the story of the "Three Little Pigs", but we find that this too was deliberate, so turning a failing into a slight advantage. The story is not as good as the earlier one, perhaps because there are not as many physiological gimmicks. But this time there is the hint of a deeper meaning, as we see that Man can have a good influence on Aliens, which is a change from some other Man and Alien stories.

Having had two stories on the same theme, I expected the third - "Father" - to be a continuation, and it was several pages before I discovered that it was not. This is more a fault of the Publisher's Editor, than of the author, though. The story this time is a little more difficult to grasp, as it is a mixture of religion and sf, the latter including yet another really alien reproductive cycle. I have never really enjoyed stories such as this, from any other than the sf angle. The fact that "mysticism" may come in, and confuse what up to then has been a logical story causes this effect. This may appeal to those readers to whom the the religious side of "A Case of Conscience" by Blish, was as comprehensible as the sf in it. I think that "Man" may have been expected to "use this story as a mirror" to see what the author thought of him, but I was unable to perform the necessary mental juggling.

"Son" is the story of Man versus Machine-possessed-of-Super-brain. Again I feel that the character of the man is a little unusual in that he fails to react as emotionally as one would expect him to in the circumstances. With the scene set in a future, but non-nuclear, war, there is plenty of scope for soul-searching, but there is the added interest in the author's study of the defects which the Superbrain built into it by its makers, who, being human, have these failings themselves. It is questionable whether this would in fact occur, but it is feasible enough to appear convincing.

"My Sister's Brother", the last story in the book, deals with a strange race of symbiotes on Mars and, though to tell more would be to spoil the story, once again there is the strange reproductive system to add interest to this very good story. This system seems so unlikely to ever achieve it's desired effect that one has difficulty in believing it possible except that the hero discovers that it is. Towards the end of the story, we are shown how cruel and unpleasant Man can be, even unintentionally, through the tendency to ascribe to beings with human physical characteristics, human mental characteristics as well. The story ends on a macabre note to help to bring this out.

The five stories then are in the main enjoyable, though perhaps there should have been a better indication of the break between the first two stories and the rest. They are all well conceived, as far as the science in them goes, but tend to fail on the human side, in the portrayal of believable human beings. The book is worth

reading both for entertainment, and for an insight into the author's ideas about Man.

Chris Miller.

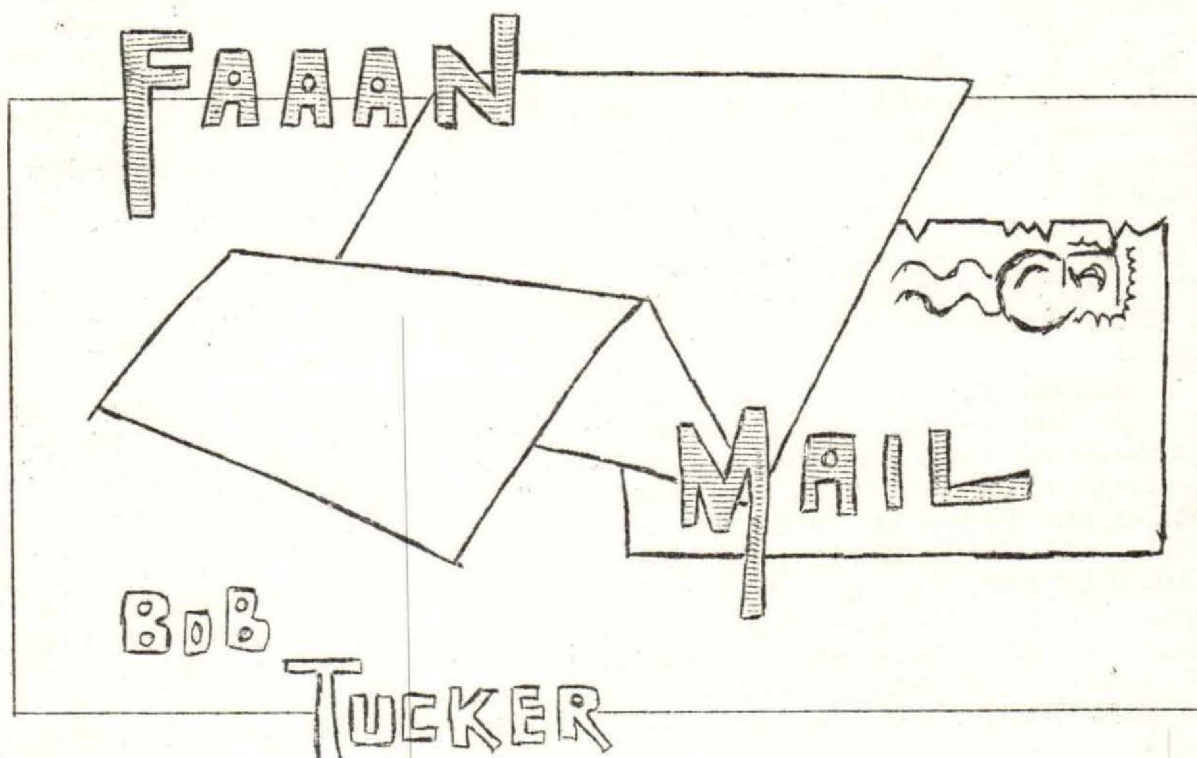
A PRINCESS OF MARS by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Four Square Books 2/6d

This is the story which made Burroughs as a fantasy-adventure writer, when it was first published in 1919. Since then it has run into thirteen impressions, the last as recent as 1952. I first read it myself thirty-five years ago, which makes it difficult for me to be quite objective about it. The date is significant, in that one is reminded that there was no 'science-fiction' as such, at that time. The modern reader, more familiar with plausibility levels, and considerably better informed about science in general, will have no difficulty in finding great holes in the work, on the technical side. ERB's Barsoom, for example, is like no Mars we are likely to reach, although possibly plausible by the knowledge of the period. The light from those twin moons, which serves him so well in painting picturesque backgrounds is unhappily false; the strange jewel emitting those extra two rays, unknown to our earthly eyes, and thus indescribable, is an impossibility, as is the fact that one ray is a power-source, and the other used for buoyancy, and both storable in tanks. The biological liberties taken with animal and humanoid forms are as unlikely as the fact that the completely 'human' Red Martians are inter-fertile with humans (Earth-type) yet either lay, or are hatched from, eggs. These, and many more, are perhaps jarring to the modern eye.

Against this, however, there is the credit side. Burroughs had an amazing talent for invention in all sorts of fields; he made his technology sound plausible; his names for characters trip easily from the tongue and are convincing; he filled in every detail as necessary with sketchwork of logical invention in social, political, military and religious fields, with many a gentle side-comment on Earth-type similarities and differences. He managed to grasp, most of all, two aspects that are all too often missing from the modern SF story; he gave Mars a history, from the actions and words of the characters, and he never lost sight of the fact that he was dealing with a whole planet. All too frequently, in the current style of story, one gets the impression of a planetary civilization as consisting of one or two towns or cities, and one type of people.

Any part of the whole effect, on analysis, is liable to break apart as does a soap-bubble when you try to capture it. But Burroughs is not for analysis. He is for reading and enjoyment. In this book he told a first-class adventure story, at a cracking pace, never letting up for a moment, and in which all the events and personalities are real, three-dimensional, and convincing. If you are about to read 'A Princess of Mars' for the first time, I envy you the treat in store. If you enjoy it, then look out for the rest, going on to 'Gods of Mars' 'Warlord of Mars' 'Thuvia, Maid of Mars' and so-on. You won't be disappointed.

John Phillifent.



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Once upon a time I wrote a book, and that book drew fan mail.

I don't mean just any of the books I've written, nor do I mean just ordinary fanmail from ordinary fans -- like you mangy critturs out there. No, sir, this one particular novel pulled real faaaaaaan mail from gibbering little monsters lurking on the lunatic fringe. The mail gave me a better opinion of the true fandom I know and love.

In my long and honourable (hah) career I've produced (hacked out) fifteen epic novels (thrillers, penny dreadfuls); three of them have been rejected. The twelve that did see print met with varying success, financially and critically. The poorest of them earned me only a few hundred dollars and was quickly forgotten by critic and reader alike; the best has passed the five hundred thousand dollar mark and is still flying. Six of them were mystery stories, five were science fiction novels and one was a collection of short stories. My true favourite never got off the ground; the one that was knocked out to meet a deadline is selling like inflated real estate. I'm told it always happens this way.'

In one of the mystery novels I misplaced the Illinois River, and a bright-eyed reader wrote me about the matter, tactfully suggesting that I stop changing the respective courses of the Illinois and the Mississippi. In another book, I inadvertantly left an unidentified and unexplained corpse at the bottom of a well, but nobody seemed to notice that. In a series of five

related mysteries, revolving about the same two people, I kept changing the girl's eyes from blue to brown, but nobody seemed to give a faint damn. In a story dealing with archeology, I goofed by describing stone tablets instead of clay tablets; only Miz Hoffman-Shaw caught that one. And, finally, in a grim after-the-bomb novel, I ended the story with the finest piece of logical plotting I could conceive...but my editor cut it out because she considered cannibalism too gruesome for the gentle readers. What's the matter with you critturs, you got weak stomachs?

And then one day, in a Ray Palmerish mood, I turned out a book I called "Wild Talent". Bantam changed the title to "The Man From Tomorrow" for their edition. Gee whiz. Things began to happen.

Basically, this is the "man-with-the-x-ray-eyes" plot, only the hero had x-ray mental powers. Hi-psi stuff. I never in my life dreamed that America was psi crazy. "Wild Talent" didn't make much of a dent upon the reading public; I don't recall getting any response from the hardcover or book club editions, except that Dutch Ellis published an amusing spoof of it. But the following year, Bantam published "Man From Tomorrow" and the deluge began. Do you remember the cover? It was an inspired, compelling thing. A man's face was spread all over that cover; sinister things were visibly happening behind his forehead, and two streaks of blue lightning were shooting from his powerful eyes. Goshwowboy-ohboy!

That's when the lunatic fringe discovered me. I started getting faaaaaaan mail.

Two or three readers, seemingly decent chaps, wanted to know where they could obtain copies of Dr. Roy's definitive volume, "Studies in Psychokinesis". One man said that even his librarian had been unable to track it down. I had to tell these disappointed readers that the book did not exist -- I had invented it, to give the hero something to study. They probably committed suicide upon learning this.

Another reader, an outraged fellow this time, took me to task because the hero killed villain, to save himself. In unmistakable terms he informed me that telepathic people did not kill; they were a race apart and above us crawling humans and our despicable habits, and would not stoop to our sins. Still another reader objected, not to the killing, but to the fact that it happened in Florida. On one of Florida's nice, clean white beaches. Why were writers always bloodying up Florida's pure, hallowed ground?

A young fellow in Michigan gave me the works. I committed an error here, I was downright stupid there, telepaths weren't like that at all, and why was I giving a black eye to the whole race? Didn't I believe in the future of America? Was I hoping to drive the hidden people further underground, and thus postpone their emergence for another generation or so? Was I not aware of the fact that telepaths walked among us, rubbed shoulders and knocked elbows with us, and that I was signing my own death warrant -- practically? And just in case I got any bright ideas, I was being stymied in advance. The young man warned me not to attempt to trace him.

Many readers, perhaps as many as a dozen, wrote encouraging letters. They realized that I was trapped among sodden humanity, that I could not reveal myself for fear of death, and so had presented my story as fiction. They urged me to buck up, to be of stout heart, for better times were coming. And meanwhile, for their enjoyment, they would welcome a sequel detailing further adventures of my life. A woman somewhere in the Northwest -- I believe it was Idaho -- adopted a somewhat similar tack, with variations. She sympathised with me, agreed with me that telepaths were having one hell of a time in the world today, but was equally sure that a brighter day was coming for "our" people. And in the meantime, was I lonely?

There was a scattering of letters wanting to know who "Paul Breen" really was; what was his real name, and why was I covering up for him? There were letters equally certain "Paul Breen" was an alias, but who professed to understand why I was using an alias. A few readers asked me, naively, if "Paul Breen" actually existed. Was he a flesh-and-blood man of my acquaintance, was he someone I had heard about, or had I really imagined him from whole cloth? Surely he wasn't mere fiction?

One reader demanded to know where "Paul" was hiding.

And finally, my favourite faaaaaaan letter of all, was that one which was so perfect it will be unbelievable. It was a mysterious thing which arrived via airmail from some foreign country -- I don't know which country because there was no return address, and the postage was missing. Either the stamp had fallen off or some postoffice clerk had picked it off for his collection. To compound the perfect gag, and to make it all the more unbelievable, the postmark was unreadable. To me, it was an airmail letter from somewhere, no more, no less. It contained a very brief letter from "Paul Breen". He taunted me in one or two lines, and signed his name. That was all. It was enough. I later discovered the practical joker who perpetrated that gag and my admiration of him has grown by leaps and et cetera. But I fail to understand how fate so perfectly played into his hand. How did he arrange for the postmark to be unreadable, and the stamp to be missing?

But as for the other mail, the real letters from real faaaaans -- hell, I'll take tru-fandom any day. Tru-fandom hasn't done me any dirt worse than stealing the ten of clubs and burying me. Just good, clean, normal fun.

from a letter from Bob Tucker...

"As a postscript, I might add that the wacky letters on WILD TALENT are still coming in. Various foreign editions are available now, and just any day I expect to get a faaan letter from Japan or Israel.

I did a half-dozen mystery novels before turning to science fiction, and those half-dozen mysteries probably did not pull a half-dozen letters altogether, whereas WILD TALENT and LONG LOUD SILENCE have brought in fifty or sixty letters. I guess mystery fans just don't write letters."

letter SECTION

Howard Leigh, Christ Church, Oxford.

I agree with you entirely about the fannish aspect of the BSFA. Many people who read sf have never heard of fandom until they join the BSFA. I first met it through Chris Miller, earlier this year, though I wasn't terribly interested until I came down to a meeting of the SFCoL. Since then I have read several fanzines, and enjoyed them very much indeed. But it was, in a way, through the BSFA that I became interested, as it was partially to join this organisation that I went to that meeting. Other sf readers may not be as lucky as I was in meeting a fan, and so may never hear of fandom until they happen to join the BSFA. So I don't think that the fannish side of the BSFA ought to be dropped, though it ought not to become a major aspect. And since fandom is a minor, though nonetheless important, part of the sf readership, the BSFA MUST continue to mention fandom in its publications.

Was interested in Brian Aldiss' article on Clifford Simak. Although I haven't read any of Simak's work for sometime now he is one of my favourite authors, and I am looking forward to reading this new anthology. Maybe I like Simak's simplicity and also his sympathy towards aliens. I expect that when the aliens invade, Simak will be the first to be reprieved by our conquerors.

Brian's review of NEW MAPS OF HELL was most intelligent. I have heard one or two people condemning it simply because it did not agree with their own opinions on sf. The danger in writing sf, it seems to me, is the tendency of some authors to put in too much theory. After all it's the story that one wants to read, not a thesis on the biochemistry of aliens, or on the new ideas of modern physics. You can get those from the many books published on popular science; such as those by the good Doctor Asimov.

Oh brother, you've got to be a mental giant to be able to play this 3-D chess. P'raps practice would help a little, but this game seems just the thing for giving to the latest and best electronic computer to deal with. God only knows, ordinary chess

is bad enough and I used to play that at one time, but I can't visualise this becoming a popular game, not even in the USSR. Anyone for blindfold 3-D chess?

Looking at the prozine reviews, my belief that generally speaking 50 percent of the stories in them are crud is confirmed. Hence I now refuse to buy any prozines at all, preferring to read the best of the shorts in good anthologies, and the serials in proper book form, should they be published like this. Mind you, I do read magazines, but only when I got the opportunity to buy them second hand or borrow them from someone else or from the BSFA library.

Being only a very raw newcomer to fandom, I hadn't read this wonderful "Ballad of the BEM" before. I think I spent about 5 minutes after reading this in hysterics! I could almost imagine it happening! Are there any more epics of this nature lying around in some long-dead fanzine? If so why not reprint another?

Er, tell me, where can I get a circuit for the Hieronymous machine? I was thinking, if it does work, maybe I could do a thesis on it for my B.A.!

Are all fans immune to common sense (a la John Phillifent's accusation). I dunno, but from my minute experience of fen, I'd say only on Sundays (at SFCoL meetings). Otherwise they're people with a rather strange sense of humour, which to nonfen, seems somewhat, er, childish. And to me there are various kinds of fen. There are the crazy way-out fen, barely on the right side of the border line between sanity and lunacy. Then there are those fen with just a funny sense of humour, and finally the serious fen. Only the really way-out fen may genuinely lose their common sense, and then surely not many of them.

Then John starts arguing about the number of people who read sf in prozine form. He calculates that about 200,000 people fall into this category. And of these how many are likely to read sf seriously? That is, seriously enough to join the BSFA? After all, that is to me the only way that one can read all the sf one wants to without spending a helluva lot of money. It used to cost me 2/- or more at a time to buy sf, whilst now, I can obtain reading matter at far less than that, and, what is far more important to me, I can read precisely what I want to read. OK, I know that the books I read are on loan, but then I'm not a collector of sf in the way that many people are. In fact, I can't afford to be yet, even if I wanted to.

(* I find that the best way round the business of reading the prozines without buying them is to borrow them through the current magazine section of the library. At a cost of 6d per mag and the postage (usually 5d) to send them on to the next person on the list, I get to read all of the current American prozings within months of publication. That way I can see if I want to get that particular issue for my collection when I next come across a copy.

I believe Sid Birchby has done others of these ballads, but the only other one I know is far too fannish for VECTOR, I don't get the allusions in it myself! What do you think of the reprint this issue?

That Hieronymous Machine. BRE ASF - 1956 Nov., 1957 Jan., June, and Oct. The first two are the ones with the electronic

components, the others the symbolic effort. And Good Luck to you! I must, of course, deny this vile canard about the Science Fiction Club of London. We are quite sober serious types really, we just relax in a rather bizarre fashion that's all.

To my mind there is a difference between someone willing to lay out money to buy sf and one willing to lay out money to join a society promoting sf. The former requires only an interest in sf, the latter a devotion to the genre amounting almost to fanaticism. The active reformers/improvers are always in a minority.)**

This next letter requires a bit of an explanation. I had intended to run a Convention report made up of several persons views and opinions on it, and to that end I approached several of the attendees. Unfortunately only Paul Andrews was able to produce anything so instead of a separate Con. report I'm printing his letter here. Ed.

Paul Andrews, 1 John Street, Maidstone, Kent.

I know this is a bit late to send my comments on the Con. in, but here goes. Was my journey really necessary? Yes Indeed! I can't recall when I've enjoyed three days so much. To take the items in order, the welcome got us into the swing of things, then came the programme of films which, I'm sorry to say, weren't too good. In fact I think that they were the worst part of the con., but at least we got them over early. The wander around afterwards collecting autographs I thoroughly enjoyed, and I met some really nice people.

On the Saturday I got in a bit late (a coupla minutes or so) for "Typo" ((the Cheltenham Group tape-play)) but picked up the thread easily enough. It was well done, but seemed to go just a bit too long. It was obvious though that a lot of work had gone into it's making and the CSFC can be applauded. The talk which followed, by Mr Doherty, was very interesting to me as the first sf book that I read I had got out of the school library - it was Best SF Two - and since then I've never stopped reading sf, and I wish that all schools would place a few of the better books on their shelves, if only to give the pupil a bit of choice in his reading matter (it might even make some of them think). I never had the opportunity of seeing Don Ford when he was in London, but after seeing his slide show I wish that I had. The Kingsley Amis talk I enjoyed, but even more so the heated arguments that followed.

Then a much needed rest till the Party in the evening when a grand time was had by all, and some wonderful costumes were seen, especially the one that Eddie wore, which deservedly won first prize. Just who was it under - 1) the BHM early on in the evening, and 2) the latecomer who came in the magnificent medieval costume?

The A.G.M. brought up some interesting items, and let us get a fleeting glimpse of those who will be on the stage next year, much to the dismay of several members of the audience. And so to food. Unfortunately I mistimed the afternoon's programme (I wish that I'd learned to read properly) and missed all but the last few minutes of the SFCoL production. I did, however, see "This Is Your Fan Life" in which Eric Jones was the victim, and was finally confronted with an Anonymous Machine or something which he had, all

unwittingly, created himself. Grand fun this.

On to the TAFF talk, in which a rather hoarse Eric Bentcliffe, with the aid of gallons of Soda Water, put on an excellent talk of his trip. Then came the last item that I could stay for, but which was certainly well worth staying for - the Sunday film show. Oh, how different this was from the first one. "The Mesquite Kid" from the States was spoilt somewhat by the poor sound, but the rest of the bill made up for that. The two technical films were an excellent addition, and I feel that if they had been put into the Friday film show they would have balanced the two shows - still that's my only gripe about the whole Con. The main feature, "Forbidden Planet", was a film that I had missed when it came to our local cinema (if it ever did) and so was a very pleasant way to end the Con., they certainly had some marvellous effects in that film.

Unfortunately I couldn't stop for any room parties as I had a 200 mile drive ahead of me, and didn't want to hit all the Easter Monday traffic, but even so I had a grand time all through the Convention, and would like to offer my sincere thanks to all those concerned with it's production.

(* You might be interested to hear that Geoff Doherty has written up his talk and it'll be in the next VECTOR. The Costume Party - I don't know who the BEM was, but the latecomer in the medieval costume was Bill Gray of Cheltenham. He'd come straight from a play he was in locally, hence the costume.*)*

John Campbell, 40 Nook Rise, Liverpool 15.

VECTOR 11's cover - interesting: is this what Daphne meant about a sort of design? This might be as good as any for a permanent cover - but aren't we ever going to get another like Eddio's on #9? Personally I'm in favour of pictorial covers - but only if you can get more like #9.

I should point out to Brian Aldiss that in one of Simak's recent stories, "The Golden Bugs"; just the opposite of the usual in his stories occurs: the aliens, apparently very helpful towards humans at the outset, end up leaving dogs full of holes and forcing everyone to evacuate. Courtesy, Brian...?

The Ballad of the BEM - lovely. That's the only word for it, and for the fabulous Atom illos as well. More of this please.

Now, I'd be grateful for information on a couple of points from anyone who reads this. Firstly did H.P. Lovecraft ever write a story, poem or anything, called "Lynne Foster is dead"? It may have been printed under another name but it was in Weird Tales at some time. I first read of it in a letter in a Weird Tales, British Edition, number 15 (1952), where someone suggested that it should be reprinted.

Also, Derleth, in his forward to The Shattered Room and Others, mentions that the following have written Cthulhu Mythos stories: Donald Wandrei, Ray Bradbury, Leah Bodine Drake, David H. Keller, Evangeline Watton, William Hope Hodgson, Carl Jacobi, Seabury Quinn, Fritz Leiber, A.E. Coppard, Algernon Blackwood; L.P. Hartley, Cynthia Asquith, John Metcalfe, H.R. Wakefield, Lord Dunsany and S. Fowler Wright. Can anyone tell me the names of these works, and also where I can get hold of them?

Charles Smith, 61 The Avenue, Ealing, London, W.13.

This letter is inspired by my recent reading of Kingsley Amis' "New Maps of Hell" and by the excellent review in VECTOR 11 by Brian Aldiss. I found the book both exciting and stimulating, and heartily agree with Brian Aldiss' enthusiastic welcoming of this survey.

However, as was to be expected, there were various points on which, I found, I could not agree with Amis (as many other readers have possibly found) particularly in his choice of authors to whom he gave his attention. I wish he had considered in more detail such authors as Sturgeon, Leiber and Miller.

I was not able to understand his aversion to fantasy and I felt that he did not explain this as well as he might have done, particularly as he made a number of rather violent attacks on this field.

Where I do feel, however, that the book and I part company is where he begins to discuss the relative merits of Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth. He states that Frederic Pohl is "the most consistently able writer science-fiction, in the modern sense, has yet produced", which is of course a fair individual and personal reaction to Pohl's writing.

I also admire Pohl greatly in his roles of editor and critic but less, though still a great deal, as a creative writer. Amis then suggests that Pohl "filled in the social background and satire" in his collaboration with Cyril Kornbluth (The Space Merchants, Gladiator-at-Law, Search the Sky and Wolfbane) while Kornbluth's contribution was "roughly to provide the more violent action". Mr. Amis comes to this conclusion as a result of reading "The Syndic" and "Not this August". I feel, however, that if he had considered some of Kornbluth's shorter works, his masterly treatment of the modern vampire in "The Mindworm", his stinging spoof on television in "The Advent on Channel Five" and his bitter attack on security and bureaucracy in "Gomez" and in his brilliantly exciting novel "Take-Off", I feel he might have come to a different conclusion and evaluation of Kornbluth's contribution to "The Space Merchants".

It is interesting to compare Pohl's two solo novels, "Slave Ship" and "Drunkard's Walk" with his collaborations with Kornbluth and to note that the element of "violent action", to use Mr. Amis' own phrase, is still present. It is also interesting to compare the menace Cornut meets in "Drunkard's Walk" with Mordin's antagonists in "Gladiator-at-Law". In both cases, the hero is in conflict with a group of immortals who have gained power through their immortality and who try to destroy the hero who threatens their existence.

Thus, either Pohl has decided to carry on Kornbluth's 'trade' (to provide "the violent action") and has succeeded very well or Pohl himself had a great deal of the responsibility for "the violent action" of the collaboration and conversely, Kornbluth had a great deal of responsibility for the satire and social background.

While making comparisons, one might also compare the last portion of "Search the Sky" with Kornbluth's short story "The Marching Morons", where the social backgrounds are identical and, as the short story came first, presumably due to the imagination

of Kornbluth.

WEALSOHEARDFROM.

Jill Adams of Southampton, with some ideas for a cover design, thanks Jill. And John Ashton of Ormskirk, Lancs., who says that he's just seen and enjoyed "The Time Machine" despite the behaviour of some members of the general public who were also there.

1961 A.G.M. MINUTES CONT.

The late Arthur Weir, D.Sc. had a tribute paid to him from the platform for his staunch support of the BSFA. His library of SF was discussed and it was suggested that after a decent interval, if Dr. Weir had not left instructions for the disposal of same, his widow should be approached and the BSFA would offer her a better price than the dealers. This was to help Mrs. Weir financially and if the books were bought they were to be the nucleus of the Dr. Arthur Weir Memorial Library, in memory of a staunch supporter and active helper of the BSFA. This was passed to the Committee for discussion. It was proposed by Terry Jeeves and seconded by K. Freeman that if the above library is not for sale a Dr. Weir Memorial Library should still be formed. Passed.

H.K. Bulmer announced that the London Circle held some funds which the members had agreed to turn over to the BSFA, and suggested that this could help towards the Memorial library. This would be discussed at the next Committee meeting and the Chairman asked H.K. Bulmer to thank the members of the London Circle for their generous gesture.

A.H. Mercer pointed out that Dr. Weir had paid his subscription for the whole year and it was proposed by K.F. Slater and seconded by L.P. Rogers that this fee should be refunded to his widow. Passed unanimously.

Eric Jones said that the library was still growing and should it have to be moved the best and quickest way of doing it would be to hire a professional removal agent. Also that as the library was now spilling over into another room in the Cheltenham club and shelves had to be bought could the library rental be increased to £10 per year. Proposed by R.M. Bennett that a professional removal agent should be called in should the library require moving. Seconded K. Freeman. Passed. It was also agreed that the Committee should discuss the question of increasing the library rent.

After discussion, it was agreed that the site of the next Convention should be Harrogate and the date Easter 1962. It was proposed by the Secretary and seconded by Brian Aldiss that the 1962 Convention Committee should consist of R.M. Bennett (to find suitable hotel), K.F. Slater (convention fees and bookings) and the Liverpool Group, including S. Birchby (Booklets and programmes). Passed.

A vote of thanks to the 1961 Convention Committee for the work they had put into the Convention was passed unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.50 pm.

FRIDAY MEETINGS

CANCELLED

from

AUGUST 18

The Friday night BSFA meetings at 151 Canterbury Road, West Kilburn will be suspended from August 18th until further notice. The reason for this is that Ella Parker is going to the United States to attend this year's World SF Convention at Seattle in September. Afterwards she'll be visiting some of her friends in America so the meetings probably won't be resumed for some 10 or 12 weeks. More details in the July Newsletter.